

transport individuals to and from facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs in connection with rehabilitation, counseling, examination, treatment, and care, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. NELSON):

S. 604. A bill to reauthorize and improve a grant program to assist institutions of higher education in establishing, maintaining, improving, and operating Veteran Student Centers; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 605. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to invest in innovation for education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 606. A bill to extend the right of appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board to certain employees of the United States Postal Service; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PAUL, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WICKER, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. BURR, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. REED, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. SASSE):

S. Res. 88. A resolution celebrating Black History Month; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. Res. 89. A resolution congratulating the Oregon Shakespeare Festival on its 80th year; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. BOXER, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. MIKULSKI, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. AYOTTE, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. FISCHER, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. Res. 90. A resolution designating February 2015 as "American Heart Month" and February 6, 2015, as "National Wear Red Day"; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. REED, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. Res. 91. A resolution designating March 2, 2015, as "Read Across America Day"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. MCCAIN (for himself and Mr. REID):

S. Con. Res. 6. A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that John Arthur "Jack" Johnson should receive a posthumous pardon for the racially motivated conviction in 1913 that diminished the athletic, cultural, and historic significance of Jack Johnson and unduly tarnished his reputation; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 141

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a co-

sponsor of S. 141, a bill to repeal the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act providing for the Independent Payment Advisory Board.

S. 153

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 153, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize additional visas for well-educated aliens to live and work in the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 166

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 166, a bill to stop exploitation through trafficking.

S. 207

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) and the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) were added as cosponsors of S. 207, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use existing authorities to furnish health care at non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities to veterans who live more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest medical facility of the Department that furnishes the care sought by the veteran, and for other purposes.

S. 226

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 226, a bill to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that major rules of the executive branch shall have no force or effect unless a joint resolution of approval is enacted into law.

S. 233

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 233, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide compensatory time for employees in the private sector.

S. 255

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 255, a bill to provide for wildfire suppression operations, and for other purposes.

S. 258

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 258, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to remove the 96-hour physician certification requirement for inpatient critical access hospital services.

S. 262

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) and the Sen-

ator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) were added as cosponsors of S. 262, a bill to reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, and for other purposes.

S. 271

At the request of Mr. REID, the names of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 271, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 298

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 298, a bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to provide States with the option of providing services to children with medically complex conditions under the Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program through a care coordination program focused on improving health outcomes for children with medically complex conditions and lowering costs, and for other purposes.

S. 338

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 338, a bill to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

S. 358

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 358, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure that women members of the Armed Forces and their families have access to the contraception they need in order to promote the health and readiness of all members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

S. 371

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 371, a bill to remove a limitation on a prohibition relating to permits for discharges incidental to normal operation of vessels.

S. 388

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 388, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to require humane treatment of animals by Federal Government facilities.

S. 396

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) and the Senator from

Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 396, a bill to establish the Proprietary Education Oversight Coordination Committee.

S. 431

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 431, a bill to permanently extend the Internet Tax Freedom Act.

S. 474

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) were added as cosponsors of S. 474, a bill to require State educational agencies that receive funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to have in effect policies and procedures on background checks for school employees.

S. 498

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 498, a bill to allow reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms.

S. 517

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 517, a bill to extend the secure rural schools and community self-determination program, to restore mandatory funding status to the payment in lieu of taxes program, and for other purposes.

S. 524

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 524, a bill to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.

S. 532

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 532, a bill to improve highway-rail grade crossing safety, and for other purposes.

S. 546

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 546, a bill to establish the Railroad Emergency Services Preparedness, Operational Needs, and Safety Evaluation (RESPONSE) Subcommittee under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Advisory Council to provide recommendations on emergency responder training and resources relating to hazardous materials incidents involving railroads, and for other purposes.

S. 554

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) and the Senator from Massa-

chusetts (Mr. MARKEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 554, a bill to provide for the compensation of Federal employees affected by a lapse in appropriations.

S. 568

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine) were added as cosponsors of S. 568, a bill to extend the trade adjustment assistance program, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 578. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of myself and Senator SCHUMER to introduce legislation to ensure that our seniors and disabled citizens have timely access to home health services under the Medicare program.

Nurse practitioners, physician assistants, certified nurse midwives and clinical nurse specialists are all playing increasingly important roles in the delivery of health care services, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas of our country where physicians may be in scarce supply. In recognition of their growing role, Congress, in 1997, authorized Medicare to begin paying for physician services provided by these health professionals as long as those services are within their scope of practice under State law.

Despite their expanded role, these advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants are currently unable to order home health services for their Medicare patients. Under current law, only physicians are allowed to certify or initiate home health care for Medicare patients, even though they may not be as familiar with the patient's case as the non-physician provider. In fact, in many cases, the certifying physician may not even have a relationship with the patient and must rely upon the input of the nurse practitioner, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist or certified nurse midwife to order the medically necessary home health care. At best, this requirement adds more paperwork and a number of unnecessary steps to the process before home health care can be provided. At worst, it can lead to needless delays in getting Medicare patients the home health care they need simply because a physician is not readily available to sign the form.

The inability of advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home health care is par-

ticularly burdensome for Medicare beneficiaries in medically underserved areas, where these providers may be the only health care professionals available. For example, needed home health care was delayed by more than a week for a Medicare patient in Nevada because the physician assistant was the only health care professional serving the patient's small town, and the supervising physician was located 60 miles away.

A nurse practitioner told me about another case in which her collaborating physician had just lost her father and was not available. As a consequence, the patient experienced a 2 day delay in getting needed care while they waited to get the paperwork signed by another physician.

Another nurse practitioner pointed out that it is ridiculous that she can order physical and occupational therapy in a subacute facility but cannot order home health care. One of her patients had to wait eleven days after being discharged before his physical and occupational therapy could continue simply because the home health agency had difficulty finding a physician to certify the continuation of the same therapy that the nurse practitioner had been able to authorize when the patient was in the facility.

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act will help to ensure that our Medicare beneficiaries get the home health care that they need when they need it by allowing physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and certified nurse midwives to order home health services. Our legislation is supported by a broad coalition of organizations, including the AARP, the National Council on Aging, the American Geriatrics Society, the National Association for Home Care and Hospice, the American Nurses Association, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the American College of Nurse-Midwives, and the Visiting Nurse Associations of America. I urge my colleagues to join us as cosponsors of this important legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a letter of support be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FEBRUARY 25, 2015.

Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS AND SENATOR SCHUMER: Thank you for introducing the bipartisan Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015. We, the undersigned groups, pledge our continued support of your efforts to obtain passage of this important legislation in the 114th Congress. As you know, the bill authorizes nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse-midwives and physician assistants as eligible health care professionals who can certify patient eligibility for home health care services under Medicare. This critical